



Boston, Massachusetts: America's City of Firsts



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Known for its key role in the American Revolution and its excellent educational institutions, Boston is the capital of Massachusetts and the political, commercial and financial center of New England. With a population of 4.6 million, Greater Boston is the 10th-largest U.S. metropolitan area.

Explore historic neighborhoods that were home to early American patriots and welcomed generations of immigrants. Wander Boston's red-bricked "Freedom Trail" and its "Emerald Necklace" of green park spaces, including the famous Boston Common. The

city's rich past is complemented by a thriving present as a global leader in innovation.

Then and Now

Before European colonization, the area around Boston was inhabited by the Massachusett, an Algonquian tribe for which Massachusetts is named.

English religious dissidents began arriving in the Massachusetts and Cape Cod Bay areas in 1620, when the Pilgrims founded Plymouth. In 1630, John Winthrop led a group known as the Puritans to the area's Shawmut peninsula and founded the city of Boston. Its

harbor grew its wealth and its population, making Boston the largest town in British North America until the mid-18th century.

Boston was the birthplace of the American Revolution. Tensions between colonists and British forces led to the 1770 Boston Massacre, the 1773 Boston Tea Party and the 1774 Intolerable (Coercive) Acts, which stripped Massachusetts of self-governance and placed the city under military law. Instead of setting a cautionary example to other Colonies, British actions against Boston triggered outrage, resistance and solidarity. When British forces tried

Boston, Massachusetts

to seize Colonial military supplies outside the city in 1775, they were stopped by Colonial militia and the Revolutionary War began.

Key dates include:

- 1632 — Boston becomes the capital of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- 1635 — America's first public school, the Boston Latin School, opens.
- 1704 — *The Boston News-Letter*, America's first regularly issued newspaper, begins publication.

The People

As New England's main port, Boston attracted a steady stream of immigrants from around the world.

According to the 2010 census, the racial composition of Boston is 53.9 percent white, 24.4 percent African American, 17.5 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 8.9 percent Asian. According to a 2012 estimate, the city's population is 636,479.

The Land

Boston is the only state capital in the contiguous United States with an ocean coastline. Founded on a peninsula formed by the Charles River and Massachusetts Bay that creates a natural harbor, Boston has tripled its original footprint during 300 years of leveling hills to fill in marshes and tidal flats.

The Climate

New England has cold winters, but Boston's coastal location makes its climate more moderate than inland areas. Its coldest month is January, when the average temperature is 29 degrees Fahrenheit (-2 degrees Celsius) and its hottest is July, which averages 73 degrees Fahrenheit (23 degrees Celsius). Bostonians see snow from December through March. Coastal storms, known as "nor'easters," produce much of the precipitation.



Boston's Fenway Park, the oldest U.S. professional sports venue © Shutterstock.com

- 1706 — American scientist, inventor, diplomat, humorist and statesman Benjamin Franklin is born in Boston.
- 1775 — The newly formed American Colonial army challenges British forces in Boston at Bunker Hill.
- 1848 — The Boston Public Library becomes the world's first publicly supported free municipal library.
- 1876 — Alexander Graham Bell demonstrates the first telephone.
- 1897 — The Boston subway opens as the first underground metro system in North America.
- 1897 — Racers participate in the first Boston Marathon, the world's oldest annual marathon.
- 1917 — John F. Kennedy, who would be elected president in 1960, is born in the Boston neighborhood of Brookline.
- 1955 — Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. earns his doctorate in theology from Boston University.
- 2013 — The Boston Marathon is marred by bombings that kill three people and injure 264.

"The Athens of America"

Education is central to Boston's history and significance. Its Cambridge

neighborhood is home to Harvard University, America's oldest institution of higher learning and one of the world's most prestigious universities, but there are 66 other colleges and universities in the Boston area, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Boston College.

Boston's fashionable neighborhoods like Beacon Hill's federal row houses and gaslit cobblestone streets contrast sharply with the modern shopping district of Newbury Street and the Charlestown waterfront, home to the USS Constitution. Boston is famous for seafood dishes such as clam chowder and lobster rolls. Ye Olde Union Oyster House, opened in 1826, is one of America's oldest restaurants, and the Bull and Finch Pub was the model for the 1980s television show *Cheers*.

Movies like *Good Will Hunting* and Robert Parker's popular Spenser mystery series also have brought Boston's people, culture and neighborhoods into popular culture. Sports fans will enjoy Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox. Opened in 1912, it's the oldest U.S. professional sports venue.